

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace the previously submitted claims appearing in the above-noted application.

1. (Currently amended) A method of producing a nonwoven fabric for use in cigarette filters comprising the steps of forming a web of fibers, and optionally other filling components, via the latex bonded airlaid or multibonded airlaid method and coating the web with an aqueous based polymer binder comprising one or more polymer compositions and one or more stabilizing agents, where the stabilizing agent is present in amounts of from 1 to 15 parts per hundred weight monomer based on the monomer content of the polymer composition, and wherein the nonwoven fabric comprises in the range of about 30 to about 2 parts by dry weight of the binder and in the range of about 70 to about 98 parts by dry weight of the fibers and other filling components, and wherein the binder, fibers and filling components are acceptable for use in cigarette filter applications.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the fibers comprise fluff pulp fibers.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the binder comprises one or more polymer compositions selected from the group consisting of vinyl acetate homopolymers, ethylene vinyl acetate copolymers, copolymers of vinyl acetate with vinyl esters of long-chain saturated aliphatic carboxylic acids with lengths up to C₁₈, vinyl acetate/veova copolymers and mixtures thereof.
4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the one or more polymers are polymerized from monomers selected from the group consisting of ethylene, vinyl acetate, vinyl esters of aliphatic carboxylic acids having chain lengths up to C₁₈ and mixtures thereof.
5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more stabilizing agents are high molecular weight protective colloids.

6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 5, wherein the high molecular weight protective colloids are selected from the group consisting of polyvinyl alcohol, ethylcellulose, hydroxyethylcellulose, methylcellulose, hydroxymethylcellulose, carboxymethylcellulose, sodium potassium and magnesium salts of carboxymethylcellulose, dextrans, gum arabic and mixtures thereof.
7. (Withdrawn) A nonwoven fabric for use in cigarette filters made according to the method of claim 1.
8. (Withdrawn) A polymer binder composition for use in the consolidation of nonwoven fabric webs for application in cigarette filters comprising one or more polymer compositions and one or more high molecular weight protective colloids, wherein the polymers are polymerized from monomers selected from the group consisting of ethylene, vinyl acetate and vinyl esters of aliphatic carboxylic acids with chain lengths of up to C₁₈.
9. (Withdrawn) The polymer binder composition of claim 8, wherein the one or more high molecular weight protective colloids are selected from the group consisting of polyvinyl alcohol, ethylcellulose, hydroxyethylcellulose, methylcellulose, hydroxymethylcellulose, carboxymethylcellulose, sodium, potassium, and magnesium salts of carboxymethylcellulose, dextrans, gum arabic and mixtures thereof.
10. (Withdrawn) The polymer binder composition of claim 8, wherein the polymer composition is selected from the group consisting of vinyl acetate homopolymers, ethylene vinyl acetate copolymers, copolymers of vinyl acetate with vinyl esters of long-chain saturated aliphatic carboxylic acids with lengths up to C₁₈, vinyl acetate/veova copolymers and mixtures thereof.
11. (Withdrawn) A nonwoven fabric for use in cigarette filters comprising the polymer binder compositions of claim 8.
12. (New) The method according to claim 1, wherein the aqueous based polymer binder comprises from about 87 wt. percent to about 99 wt. percent of a water insoluble polymer, on a dry basis.

13. (New) The method according to claim 1, wherein the stabilizing agent consists of protective colloids.
14. (New) The method according to claim 1, wherein the polymer binder is substantially free of surfactants.
15. (New) A method of producing a nonwoven fabric for use in cigarette filters comprising the steps of forming a web of fibers, and optionally other filling components, via the latex bonded airlaid or multibonded airlaid method and coating the web with an aqueous polymeric dispersion which consists essentially of:
 - a) water;
 - b) at least one synthetic polymer composition which is dispersed in the water, where the polymer composition is polymerized by a method selected from the group consisting of emulsion polymerization, inverse emulsion polymerization, and suspension polymerization; and
 - c) at least one protective colloid selected from the group consisting of polyvinyl alcohol, ethylcellulose, hydroxyethylcellulose, methylcellulose, hydroxymethylcellulose, carboxymethylcellulose, sodium potassium and magnesium salts of carboxymethylcellulose, dextrans, gum arabic and mixtures thereof, wherein the protective colloid is effective to stabilize the aqueous dispersion;and wherein the nonwoven fabric comprises in the range of about 30 to about 2 parts by dry weight of the binder and in the range of about 70 to about 98 parts by dry weight of the fibers and other filling components, and wherein the binder, fibers and filling components are acceptable for use in cigarette filter applications.
16. (New) The method according to claim 15, wherein the polymer composition comprises copolymers that are produced by emulsion polymerization.
17. (New) The method according to claim 16, wherein the emulsion polymerized copolymers are insoluble in water.

18. (New) A method of producing a nonwoven fabric for use in cigarette filters comprising the steps of forming a web comprising fluff pulp fibers, and optionally other filling components, via the latex bonded airlaid or multibonded airlaid method and coating the web with an aqueous based polymer binder which consists essentially of:
- a) water;
 - b) one or more water-insoluble polymer compositions; and
 - c) from 1 to 15 parts per hundred weight monomer of one or more protective colloids, based on the monomer content of the polymer composition;
- wherein the nonwoven fabric comprises in the range of about 30 to about 2 parts by dry weight of the binder and in the range of about 70 to about 98 parts by dry weight of the fibers and other filling components, and wherein the binder, fibers and filling components are acceptable for use in cigarette filter applications.
19. (New) A cigarette filter that includes a nonwoven fabric that is produced according to the method of claim 1.
20. (New) A cigarette filter that includes a nonwoven web that is bonded with an aqueous based polymer binder which has a solids content that consists essentially of a polymer composition and a protective colloid stabilizing agent.
21. (New) The cigarette filter according to claim 20, wherein the protective colloid is selected from the group consisting of polyvinyl alcohol, cellulose ethers, and combinations thereof.
22. (New) The cigarette filter according to claim 20, wherein the protective colloid consists of polyvinyl alcohol.
23. (New) The cigarette filter according to claim 20, wherein the polymer binder is substantially free of surfactants.